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ABSTRACT

A grounded theory study was conducted using open-ended interviews with white male and female senior, tenured faculty members. The setting was a major Midwestern research one university. Four male and five female participants, all white agreed to participate. An open-ended interview protocol was used. Following grounded theory strategies, open coding was used to organize and categorize the data. The findings indicated that most of the participants, male and female, did not set out to become professors. Three predominant themes emerged in the data analysis: attribution of academic success, teaching versus research, and attitudes toward sexual discrimination in academe. All but one of the participants were high achieving undergraduate students. Six of the nine went directly from undergraduate to graduate school. A clear gender difference was found regarding mentors: three of the four men described mentoring relationships but none of the women. The predicted gender dichotomy did not emerge in regard to teaching versus research. In attitudes toward sexual discrimination, the men expressed more overt support for gender equity, especially in faculty-student relationships, than the women. The female professors did not portray themselves as alienated from the culture of academe. The only official policies that the professors, both men and women, saw as barriers were nepotism laws. Men and women were equally committed to excellence in scholarship and involvement in their disciplines. (Contains 32 references.) (JLS)

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The Interplay of Gender in the Careers of White Female and Male Senior Professors

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held in Memphis, Tennessee, October 31 - November 3, 1996. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

The Interplay of Gender in the Careers of White Female and Male Senior Professors

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INTRODUCTION

Moore (1995) contends that the cultural worlds of men and women in academe are dramatically different:

> First, the formal, visible world of administrative positions and professorships contains few or no women, yet that world is often taken to be the university. Second, much of this same formal, visible world, even when it does contain women, conceals women's differently lived experiences. The clockwork of men's lives in the university is taken as the unacknowledged norm, and women's lives are then measured against that norm, as being sufficiently similar or not. But from the vantage point of the lived experience of women, as secretaries and tech-service workers, assistant professors and instructors, from the point of view of people who have children and lives that cannot be and are not subordinate to campus life, and from the point of view of people who are the least well paid and the slowest to be promoted, the university is a different world. In short, when the university is examined from the point of view of women, it is a world turned upside down. (p. 473)

Feminist analyses of academic careers have focused attention on the "white male" aspects of the academic culture and the status of women and people of color as outsiders to that culture. According to such studies, because of this cultural mismatch as well as overt and tacit sexism or racism, "junior" women and minority faculty are less likely to succeed in academe. Yet there are few studies *comparing* female and male senior professors that examine the interplay of gender in their career paths and cultural worlds. This grounded theory study used open-ended interviews with white male and

female senior, tenured faculty members in a variety of disciplines to generate constructs that may be useful in future studies of gender in academe.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A growing body of work critiques the academic culture from a feminist perspective (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Kelly & Slaughter, 1991; Placier, 1995; Simeone, 1987; Theodore, 1986). Johnsrud and Des Jarlais (1994) found that women and men experience academic careers differently and that women experience a more negative climate with personal and structural discrimination. Reports of challenges to the tenure process show women using the legal system to challenge overt discrimination (Farley, 1983; Leatherman, 1993; Magner, 1993). However, legal battles have not brought women faculty equal status with men (Bentley & Blackburn, 1992; Gray, 1985). Some attribute this to women's lack of knowledge of the unwritten rules of the academic culture (French, 1979), and subsequent need for more mentoring on how to succeed. Some attribute it to heavier family pressures (Hensel, 1991), a difference based on the unequal division of labor in the family. Still others look to financial retrenchment in higher education, in which the number of tenure track positions is shrinking and women as latecomers are being shut out (Abel, 1984; Singh & Weidman, 1992; Vandell & Fishbein, 1989). However, this last explanation is really a symptom of women's long-time exclusion, which placed them in the late-comer position.

Kuh and Whitt (1988) claim that higher education in the United States is a "product of western society in which masculine attributes like an orientation toward achievement and objectivity are valued over cooperation, connectedness and

subjectivity" (p. 43). From this perspective, women in academe are initiates who wandered into a ritual designed for men. Because of their different historical and cultural positions, women may not understand or identify with the symbols, stories and rituals that are supposed to bind them to the community's norms. Clark and Corcoran (1986) found that women in higher education are

> ...marginals or outsiders to the male world of academe (in most field areas) to some greater or lesser extent. Outsiders are excluded from, or have limited access to, informal networks of communication that carry significant professional information. They, in turn, may feel awkward and self-conscious in the male milieu and further remove themselves from informal interactions. (p. 38)

Wunsch and Johnsrud (cited in Park, 1996) say that one of the major barriers to success in academe for females is the "lack of a supportive, even hospitable, climate." (p. 60) Further, women faculty indicate that social and intellectual isolation, perpetuated by a masculine ethos of individualistic competition and a focus on research productivity, results in job dissatisfaction (Andrews; Astin, Korn. & Lewis; Ginorio; Wunsch & Johnsrud; cited in Park, 1996).

In discussing promotion decisions for women Moore (cited in Grunig, 1987) says:

> The older men who make those choices still don't feel comfortable with women. This is not considered overt discrimination; it is usually very subtle and often unconscious: those doing the choosing would never consider themselves to be discriminating against women. They are simply following their customary way of choosing people. (p. 13)

However, in a comparative survey study Heller, Puff and Mills (1985) found that there were no subtle behaviors by faculty members in higher education which would contribute to a chilly academic environment for women.

Our interest in this study was to explore the interplay of gender in the lives of male and female senior professors whose careers in academe began before the current emphasis (If there actually is one) on gender equity. We decided to ask them to talk about their lives in relation to educational institutions from an early age, beginning with elementary school, and then to trace their paths to academe. We wanted to analyze their stories for their portrayals, either spoken or implicit, of the role of gender in their careers. Would their stories, as many of the above authors claimed, tell of differently lived experiences, different worlds, cultural matches or mismatches, belonging or alienation, positive or negative climates, satisfaction or dissatisfaction?

METHODOLOGY

As qualitative researchers, we emphasize the importance of meaning and process to the understanding of human action (Bogdan & Biklin, 1982). We respect the constructed worlds of each participant, and attempt to build theory through a deep understanding of those worlds. For this study, grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) provided the method to identify factors related to gender perceptions and academic careers of white male and female senior professors. Grounded theory, first developed and applied to the field of sociology in the late 1960s, has since been used by social science researchers to provide a procedure for constructing a theory built on the views and experiences of the study participants.

The setting was a major midwestern Research I university. One researcher solicited names of senior professors who might be likely research participants and sent letters to five male and five female professors. All of the participants were white, which

reflects the demographics of senior professors at the institution and also eliminates race as an intervening factor. Five women and four men agreed to participate in the study. They ranged in age from 47 to 63, with a mean age of 55. Four of the women and three of the men were currently married. Four of the women and all of the men were full professors. The women's years in academia ranged from 15 to 31. In contrast, two of the men had been at this university for 28 years and two for 29. They are well recognized on the campus, and perhaps beyond, for the high quality of their teaching and/or research; therefore, they may not be "typical" senior professors.

The disciplines the participants represent are chemistry/physics, history, sociology, English, women studies, and engineering. We chose a wide range of disciplines, because our purpose was to generate theoretical propositions and future research questions that would not be unique to one discipline. Clark (1984) argues that the identity of the "academic man" cuts across all disciplines (p. 91). The shared values of "academic men" are supposed to include pursuit and dissemination of knowledge; autonomy and the maintenance of structures that support it (peer review, tenure); and collegiality (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Feminists argue that these traditions derive from the history of the university as a protected enclave of male scholars. Yet disciplinary subcultures do affect the academic experience. Studies have consistently demonstrated disciplinary differences among faculty in attitudes, values and personal characteristics (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Therefore, we must consider the possible cross-cutting influence of discipline on our participants' responses.

We designed an open-ended interview protocol (Appendix) to elicit the

participant's "educational life history," including experiences of schooling from an early age through graduate school and into the faculty role. That is, we considered each participant's entire life span in relation to educational institutions, teachers, and the student role. The interviewer acted as a facilitator of the participant's responses and was not directive, allowing their stories to emerge in their own words and at their own pace. The interviews were conducted in their offices on campus, which allowed the interviewer to observe them in their "academic homes." Because the interviewer is female, we have had to consider that the interviewees may have responded based on their perceptions of what she was expecting to hear about gender.

Following grounded theory strategies, using open coding the data have been organized and categorized. Associations among categories have been found and categories of data have been connected and analytically coded to form a set of theoretical propositions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Data have been analyzed using a constant comparative method in which emerging constructs are repeatedly being tested against the data and retained, modified or discarded. We looked for both overt gender themes, in which gender identity was obvious or even remarked upon by the participant, and covert themes in which gender was taken for granted.

FINDINGS

Findings indicate that most of the participants, male and female, did *not* set out with the intention to become professors. Two of the men and two of the women had attended academically rigorous parochial or private schools, but the others attended ordinary-sounding public schools. All had been successful students and generally

liked school (with some difficult or low points), but did not see themselves as "destined" for academic careers. The lone exception was a woman whose parents were both professors, who said that the idea of becoming a professor may have been there "subliminally" long before she made a conscious choice. In the other cases, interactions and relationships with other people along the way, as well as their own developing interests, turned them in this direction. One female participant pointed out that we should be wary of people's tendency to present their paths in life as planned and rational in hindsight, when the reality may likely have been more "accidental." However, no one portrayed becoming an academic as a preplanned process. In this section we will discuss three of the predominant themes that emerged in the data analysis: attribution of academic success, teaching versus research, and attitudes toward sexual discrimination in academe.

Attribution of Academic Success to Self, Teachers, Mentors and Family

This theme weaves through the participants' accounts of their paths to academic careers. For all but one (male), going to college was taken for granted, given the potential they had demonstrated in high school and their parents' and teachers' expectations. The one exception said he was a "maverick" in his family because he completed college; his father had attended but not been able to complete college during the Depression and his mother had not completed high school. At certain points they had decisions to make: which college to attend, which field to pursue, whether to pursue graduate school and where. We looked for their explanations for these decisions, as well as for the success they apparently experienced at each step.

and whether they attributed these to self, teachers, mentors or family.

SELF. All of the participants, male and female, emphasized how their own hard work contributed to their academic success. Being a good student was something that had to be sustained through effort. All but one seemed confident of their academic abilities from early in their schooling; several mentioned always receiving good grades and having skipped grades in elementary school. One man did not think he was "Phi Beta Kappa" material and had not done especially well as an undergraduate (preferring to "have fun"); but once he had decided on a career, he applied himself.

All of the participants mentioned opportunities that accompany academic success: scholarships, fellowships, assistanceships, post-docs, and finally, tenure-track positions. It seemed, from their accounts, that they simply applied for these opportunities and (voila!) received them. In some cases, people offered them opportunities that they had not even sought. Two of the women pointed out that such opportunities at one time were more readily available and perhaps not as competitive as they are today. Another woman said that she thought she had been "lucky" to be offered opportunities at just the right time:

> I would be going along and an opportunity or challenge presented itself and I tended to do it. I think more than anything else, I've been lucky.

The impression the interviews give is, "If you work hard, and do good work, they will come." This expresses a degree of faith in the system that has rewarded them.

TEACHERS. This theme included teachers and advisors from kindergarten through the doctoral program. Because the interviews had specifically elicited

information about school experiences, there were perhaps more mentions of teachers than there might have been if we had simply asked, "To which people in your life do you attribute your academic success?" Asking about school elicited memories of teachers that in some cases seem to have been long-buried.

The men's memories of their K-12th grade teachers were fairly vague. They tended to recall female teachers who had been especially "nice" or encouraging to them. For example, one recalled a teacher who had recognized his academic abilities and another remembered how the nuns at his school treated him as their "pet" because of his hard work. On the other hand, three women told much more detailed stories about their interactions with particular K-12 teachers. They made connections between teachers and classroom experiences in their lives and their own educational philosophies. For example, one woman made the connection between her dislike of actual classroom teaching, her strong scholarship ability and her experiences with her eighth grade teacher, a nun at a girls' parochial school. She explained how the teacher put her in difficult situations and caused public humiliation in the classroom, while demanding stringent scholarship. She stated

> I guess the one [teacher] who had the most impact on me was the one I had in eighth grade. She was really sharp and in those days you took scholarship exams. ... When I think about this, I realize what she did is totally unacceptable, but I went and took the scholarship exam and won the scholarship. I was happy. That's what I wanted. That was the school I wanted to go to. That was fine. Then the next week there was one at another school and she called me up and said, "I want you to go to this." And I said, "Well I don't. I've already got the one I want." She said, " Well I want you to go anyway." So I went and I won that one and so then some other students said, "We're not going to those scholarship exams, if you send her." They didn't want to go if I went. She sort of bawled me out and said, "Who do you think you are?" I said, "That's O.K. because I don't

> want to go anyway. I already went." The next one, Friday night, she said, "You're going." Now that's totally unacceptable behavior, but that's the kind of thing she did and that was devastating to me because she would..what she would do is make me stand up and read my report card to the class. I always got terrible grades in art and she would make fun of me and one time I was just crying and my mother called her up and said, "What's the matter?" She said, "Oh, nothing. I just wanted to make the other kids feel better." So what I'm saying is this woman really was good for me and I think she made me into a good student. I think she made me believe I could be a good student and she gave me a very good foundation in math that served me very well, but she also gave me an inferiority complex that was really bad.

For this professor, academic success was attributed not to a nurturing teacher, but to a near-sadistic one with high academic expectations.

One woman was generally critical of her K-12 teachers and discussed how she had had to "buck the system" from an early age by disagreeing with them. She described a "very poor" eighth grade science teacher who told the class that an eclipse of the sun could not be caused by the moon because the moon was too small. "I told him he was wrong...So, yes, I continued to have some problems." She also bucked her home economics teacher by defying explicit directions about the use of a sewing machine and by winning a Homemaker award over girls who had taken many more hours of home economics. Another told of a negative role model, an incompetent high school teacher who was "everything teachers should not be." She took her complaints about the teacher to the principal.

All but one of the participants (the man mentioned before) were very high achieving undergraduates. Six of the nine participants (three men, three women) went directly from undergraduate to graduate school. The three men all said that there was one male undergraduate professor who especially encouraged them to go straight to

graduate school and in two cases helped them obtain fellowships. One vividly remembered a female professor, a rarity in his field, who was supportive, encouraging and easy to talk with. But a more intimidating, impressive and "higher caliber" male professor provided his real motivation to continue. Another remembered this story about a professorial "role model":

> Yes, well there was [an influential teacher] in undergraduate school. At _____ there was a professor who was very much a renaissance person. He was, I guess, the one who hooked me on a number of things. He hooked me on the "New York Times". He required us, even though he taught Renaissance Reformation, he required us to read the Sunday "New York Times" and especially the news of the week and review section and then every Monday we had a test on it. So at the beginning of my junior year in college, I became, first by coercion, and now... I feel [like I'm missing something] if I don't buy it every day... and that's the first thing I do is stop in town... It's like I need a fix.

The fourth man left school and worked as a teacher at an elite high school for a short while before deciding that the love of his subject, inspired by one of his male professors, was drawing him back.

At the graduate level, two males portrayed personal, friendly "first name" relationships with their professors or advisors. For example, one said

> ...This undergraduate advisor I had encouraged me and the advisors on my masters were very awfully good. Actually, there were a couple of them, three of them and I kind of became pals almost. Played a lot of golf together.

One man and his wife were neighbors with his graduate advisor and his wife, and the two couples enjoyed socializing.

Two of the women attended women's colleges and one attended a state teachers' college -- institutions where they were more likely to encounter female professors. However, only one discussed a "female role model," a professor at a

prominent women's college who exemplified her ideal of combining research and teaching. She said

> I had a wonderful undergraduate teacher,.... She's a major scholar and a major academic in every possible way. She was a wonderful classroom teacher. I didn't know at the time, I knew some of the titles of books she had written or was writing at the time I had her as a student, but one of the things she made gave evidence of her very being is that there is not a fundamental contradiction between publishing and good teaching. In fact, they inter-animate one another. In the long debate about ... well, the really hard charging publishing people, of course, always cheat their students or they don't have office hours or ....It's just not, in my experience, not true. She was fabulous...just an overwhelming scholar. This woman has written fifteen or so authored books and edited. She's a wonderful scholar; an interesting scholar. ... She always was a wonderful teacher and always available when you needed to see her. She didn't cut short on either side. It does, from my experience of her and some other people as well, it seems to be the case that the most interesting teachers are the ones that bring their current projects in some way into the classroom. I didn't know fully at that time how insistently she was doing that, things that she was writing... So that what she was working on at the time was also what she brought into class, which meant she was fresh and excited about it.

After two classes with this professor, this woman had decided on her major. Later she applied for and received a fellowship and went directly to graduate school. In the two other cases, the women did not seem to have received support from professors, female or male, to continue their education beyond the bachelor's degree. One became a teacher and the other went to work in a laboratory. Interestingly, the two who attended coeducational state universities received more encouragement to pursue academic careers, in both cases from male professors who singled them out as having high potential in their fields. Therefore, at the time that these professors attended college, the mere presence of female professors was no guarantee that women would be encouraged to pursue graduate education.

MENTORS. Could any of the relationships described by the participants be characterized as "mentoring"? Here there was a clear gender difference among our participants. Three of the men came closest to describing such relationships; two used the term "mentor." Interestingly, only one singled out his dissertation advisor, a "master teacher as well as an internationally known researcher" for this distinction. His second mentor was his post-doc supervisor; and then as a beginning professor he had yet a third mentor, a female professor who "was like a mother to him" but also pushed him to achieve in his field. Another man, interestingly, described a woman who was department chair during his first academic position, who was nationally eminent in their field. She made him her "assistant." The third man who could be considered to have a "mentor" discussed his masters advisor at great length. He still thinks of this male professor as a model for his teaching. The fourth man really did not have a mentor; he said that his dissertation advisor did not prepare him at all for publication, and this nearly jeopardized his tenure chances. He seemed to have had to figure everything out for himself.

None of the women really described mentoring relationships. One said that she "thinks it would be helpful" and she has "tried to be one." They portrayed themselves as rather isolated decision-makers, looking for direction and models, occasionally receiving influential advice or new opportunities from a professor but not the personal support implied by the term "mentor."

FAMILY. As mentioned before, in all but one case (male) the participants' parents encouraged them to attend college. The highest family expectations were

expressed by a man who praised his immigrant family, especially his father, for the strong work ethic that he still possesses. He said

> I guess from that point on [elementary school] the most important feature of my education was my parents ... putting the great emphasis on excellence. My father used to have a saying "Either be somebody or be a shoemaker" with due respect to people who are shoemakers, if that's what they wish to do, but his point was A- is not good enough. It's either A+ or nothing. If you are going to go after it, go after it. This is the only way you are going to get ahead in this world...

His family sacrificed to send him to a private high school and continued to monitor his progress as an undergraduate. In the other cases, parents in general encouraged high achievement in school but did not appear to "push" their children too hard or in any particular direction. Three of the women and at least one of the men seemed to have been limited in their choices of colleges by their parents' income. Once they were in college they forged their own paths, based on their interests, evident abilities, and, to some extent at least, then unspoken gender expectations (e.g., the assumption that smart women should be teachers or nurses, and not pursue math or science). None of the participants expected their parents to pay for graduate education; they knew they would have to obtain financial support if they wanted to continue.

We were surprised to find more unsolicited references to spouses and children in the stories of the male professors. One even produced pictures of his children and grandchildren. Three of the men married and started families during graduate school. They uncritically portrayed traditional gender relationships in their marriages, but did recognize the contributions their wives had made to their careers in those roles. In discussing his transition from undergraduate to graduate school, one of the males gave

this remarkably understated (five daughters and a teaching job!) portrayal of the gender division of labor in his family:

> I finished up in three years by going three summers and at the end of that I got married and my wife and I both went off to graduate school in the fall ... We left seven years later and we had one M.A. (me), one Ph.D. (me), five daughters and my wife taught every semester. One year she didn't teach ... all the other years she taught.

Because of nepotism laws, he and his wife had not been able to obtain graduate assistanceships at the same institution. She deferred to him. He spent considerable time explaining how his wife had gone back to school for her doctorate, a degree she had begun before their marriage, after their children were adults. Now she has an academic position at another university.

In another case, a man described the lean years of graduate school, living in a trailer with his working wife, who stopped working when their children arrived. Another recalled "scrimping and saving" during his graduate school years, when he left home carrying his lunch at 7:30, returned home for dinner and play with the children, and then went back to study some more. He said, "I think it was some of the best years of my marriage." He noted how beautiful his wife, mother of several children, still looks after all those years, and talked about what each of his children is doing.

The fourth man married as a junior professor, which he said changed his direction somewhat and especially made him conscious of the need for financial security. His wife attended graduate school but became a full-time homemaker when their children were born. He explained how at each decision point in his career he discussed the decision with his wife (e.g., I went home and said to my wife, "Betty, I

wonder if I can do this thing with the department?"). She supported him at every step.

The women did not discuss their families to any great extent. Only one mentioned having a child, and one specifically mentioned not having children. Only two of the four married women mentioned their spouses, who in both cases were in the same discipline. This was relevant because it had had a complicating effect on their pursuit of academic careers during the period before "nepotism" rules were relaxed. One of the women, in discussing the chronology of her career said

> After I finished my degree, we got married and I did a post-doctoral and taught at the University of _____ while waiting for him to finish and then we went looking for places of employment because at that time _____ still had nepotism laws so that you could not be employed as professors in the same institution if you were married or related.

She said that she was "sufficiently old fashioned" to take several post-doctoral positions while her husband took faculty appointments, until they were able to find a university in which husband and wife could both obtain faculty positions. For a period of time, her husband's career did seem to take precedence, but she did not subordinate or abandon her academic goals to the extent that the wives in the men's stories had. She and her husband had learned to be flexible and switch fields if necessary to keep career and family together. In the other case, after marriage the woman worked as a kind of assistant to her husband until she decided to pursue a doctorate in the same field. Fortunately, she was offered a position in the same department when she finished, so that they did not need to relocate. "That was sort of the path of least resistance," she explained.

Teaching versus Research

According to some of the literature we reviewed, the teaching-research dichotomy is especially painful for women in academe, because they tend to emphasize the less-rewarded teaching side of their roles. We wondered: Would the women participants emphasize teaching over research? This was not the case. In fact, the most stirring defenses of teaching came from two of the men. They said that they disagreed with the current pressure on junior professors to excel in research rather than teaching, as well as the higher rewards afforded to research. One said that only the "old guys" can concentrate on teaching. For these two, teaching and relationships with students on a college campus are the major rewards of the academic life. Of the other two, one emphasized the quality of his academic work and how driven he had been to publish, but said that once he began teaching he really enjoyed it and became good at it. The other did emphasize his international reputation as a scholar rather than his teaching. He was the one who had left a high school teaching job to pursue scholarship in his field, and said there was an "element of snobbism," he supposed, in this decision.

Of the women, three emphasized the attractions of scholarship and research in their fields, while two talked more about teaching. It was one of the women who said quite frankly that she was not at all enthused about teaching and had never thought of herself as a teacher. She loved her field of study. However, another talked about herself almost exclusively as a teacher, about the development of her approach to students. The other teaching-oriented woman was the one who had begun as a high

school teacher and then decided to pursue graduate studies when she became very absorbed by the subject she was teaching and wanted to know more. What had bothered her about high school teaching, she said, was having to become so involved in her students' personal problems. Yet she still thought of being a professor as primarily teaching rather than research. After coming to a research institution, she developed a balance between the two. Therefore, no gender dichotomy emerged on this point.

Attitudes toward Sexual Discrimination in Academe

The third theme in the interviews was attitudes toward sexual discrimination in academe. Many authors on women in academe portray this environment as hostile or at least uncomfortable for women (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Bentley & Blackburn, 1992; Clark & Corcoran, 1984; Farley, 1985; Ginorio, 1995; Gray, 1985; Grunig, 1987; Johnsrud & Wunsch, 1991; Kelly & Slaughter, 1991; Leatherman, 1993; Magner, 1993; Park, 1996; Sandler, 1987; Simeone, 1987; Singh & Weidman, 1992; Theodore, 1986; Vandell & Fishbein, 1989, Wiley & Crittenden, 1992). According to this university's statistics, the proportion of female full professors is extremely low. Four of the five women in our study are among the few who have survived to that level. Although three women mentioned specific instances of discriminatory actions in their past educational experiences, and believe that problems still exist, they said that they do not currently experience any sexual discrimination in academe. The men acknowledged that discrimination probably occurred in the past but that they were unaware of it then; now that they are aware of it, they try to be more sensitive.

All of the women did experience problems as they progressed through the educational system. One woman, who currently mentors several young women in her field, when speaking of her graduate work said there was "lots of sexual discrimination."

> I was frankly told by one recruiter, I think it was at _____, that certainly my qualifications were fine, but all the people in the labs were males and I would be disruptive. They'd have to watch their language. If I were less attractive, you know, that might be alright.

This same woman also discussed problems with one of her graduate professors:

> I had one professor at _____, when I went in to ask a question about his course, who said he wasn't going to waste his time answering it. That I shouldn't be there. That I was taking a stipend that should have come to a man and that I wasn't going to do anything with it anyway.

Another woman, in discussing her early college career, stated

> ...they [professors] were coming out of top universities and ending up at ____ [a regional institution], where unfortunately what happened to them of course, which I also wasn't aware of at the time, but can look back now...they had such heavy teaching loads that they never became famous researchers. ...In all those years when they were teaching and doing all that work they never got very much out. And it's sad. As I say, I was not aware of all that. ... First of all, gender awareness wasn't all that great. You used to sit in classes and everybody used masculine pronouns and you never thought anything about it. You just did your work.

This same professor explains her current very positive view of gender relationships in higher education by saying

> ...I would have to say that many faculty -- they like a good student. They don't much care – black, white, male, female. Their category is good student, not so good student. ... Most of the faculty are very liberal. They pride themselves on not discriminating. When the womens' movement came in, all these guys were embracing it. I think, not insincerely, I mean in some cases they did silly things, but I think they honestly didn't want to be sexist. They wanted to be egalitarian in gender, as they had been egalitarian in race. It was easy for them to make the connection, because they had been liberal on the race issue, into the gender

> [issue]. As all of our consciousness went up, it kind of went up together -- the women as well as the men.

This professor believes that the system is now both gender- and color-blind, an ideal meritocracy.

One of the women said she had not experienced any gender discrimination in academe since her secondary school years. She gave two very blatant examples of discrimination against her in eighth grade, but said "I thought it was kind of funny. I didn't care." In discussing gender discrimination in her field she stated

> I am not sensitive to how I'm treated as a woman. I don't catch on that I'm being slighted or something like that and I'm glad I don't really, but I just don't have antennas out for that. ... One thing, I do believe when I read about women in _____, because that's one of my responsibilities [women students enrolled in study of the field], private womens' schools, high schools are a good source of women students for _____ because they are not around men and they don't have that culture of it not being feminine to be good at math and science. They just go ahead and compete with one another...

It seems that these female professors are looking for female students who can adapt to a competitive culture (as all of them did), rather than changing the culture to be less competitive and more "feminine."

Interestingly, considering their descriptions of traditional marriages, the men were more likely to note that despite progress in educational opportunities for women, female *students* in higher education still have barriers to overcome. A male professor who considers himself an advocate of women students, when discussing a particular student, said

> ... She was extremely bright... Her name was _____. She was in love with _____. ... They were both pre-med students. They were going to get married and [she] decided that it probably wasn't a good idea to have two physicians in

> the same family. So she [became] a biochemist. I've sent her a note actually telling her that she...the number of times my heart has been broken in the _____program watching young women trying to decide between career, marriage and kids. ...

He tries to convince young women they can combine a nontraditional career and a family. Paradoxically, however, in another part of the interview he said that he steered his own daughters toward traditional career fields.

Another man said that he was encouraged that he was seeing a "greater amount of gals" in his classes, perhaps 13 out of 53. He consistently referred to professors in his field as "guys." His own daughter had pursued a very traditionally female field of study, even though he said he tried to talk her out of it.

Another male professor discussed the lack of females in the department and the fact that he was instrumental in hiring a female professor. He said

> I guess the reason I say I take pride in that is because there are so many women that we have in the graduate program without any role models. In fact, that is one of the things I frequently heard from graduate students. They got very close to the woman that we have now, the women graduates, because they did not have anyone they could talk to about how difficult it is to make it in the profession. That was one of the things the department had never thought about. It was pretty much a male bastion. Probably not in malicious design, but simply the way it was.

Note that in this case as well, the professor's primary concern is for female *students*.

Therefore, although we did not probe for beliefs in this area, from their free-flowing stories the men in this group expressed more overt support for gender equity, especially in faculty-student relationships, than the women. There is the possibility,

however, that because the interviewer introduced the gender theme at the start of the interview, the men felt the need to convey a positive impression on this point.

DISCUSSION

At the beginning of this paper we asked: Would the stories of these senior female and male professors, as many authors in the literature claimed, tell of differently lived experiences, different worlds, cultural matches or mismatches, belonging or alienation, positive or negative climates, satisfaction or dissatisfaction? Our answer: Yes and no. Both male and female participants seemed to share a basic belief that the rewards they had received, in a meritocratic system, were based on their academic talents and efforts. At the time they entered graduate school, by their reports government and institutional scholarships seem to have been available to very high achieving students of either gender. This was despite a climate in which overt gender discrimination was much more prevalent. The female professors did not portray themselves as alienated from or mismatched to the culture of academe. In fact, they gave the impression of having "found themselves" in this culture, of finding a place where they could belong and could be successful. Two entered traditionally male fields, and all attended graduate programs in which most of the professors were men. All have been very successful and are today recognized as valued members of the academic culture on their campus. They completed graduate school and achieved tenure without mentors, maternity leaves, etc. Affirmative action, the mandate to attract more female students or faculty, at the time may not have been a major factor

facilitating their entry to academe. The only official policies that two women (and one man, with regard to his wife) saw as barriers were nepotism laws.

The male senior professors seemed to value teaching as highly as, in some cases more highly than, research. There was not a gender dichotomy on this issue. In fact, two of the men talked most about facing limited rewards in a system that values research over teaching. The women were just as committed as the men to excellence in scholarship and involvement in their disciplines.

Where were the differences? The women seemed to separate their personal and professional lives in reporting their memories of their educational experiences, at least in this interview context. Their husbands and children (they seemed to have fewer than the men, although we did not probe for this) were more peripheral to their accounts of individual achievement. The men, on the other hand, were more likely to include wives and children in their stories; their home lives were an integral part of their recollections of their early years in academe. Women concentrated on the formation of their academic identities in the context of educational institutions, not their personal lives. Of course, this may be related to the selection of these particular individuals, including three men who married and started families during or shortly after graduate school and saw this as having a major effect on their process. We did not ask the three married women specifically about the effects of family or home lives. We simply allowed the stories to emerge and did not probe explicitly for this theme.

The dual role of women was not given much, if any, consideration as these women moved through the faculty ranks, and they had no choice but to succeed within

the structure and roles defined for them by the male-dominated academic culture. Historically, women who entered the public sphere, including higher education, were seldom married and were considered to be less feminine. At the time these women entered academe, they did not have options such as stopping the tenure track for childbirth and childcare or the protection of gender equity policies. They did not have mentors. At the time they entered academe, most faculty were male and the family pattern the men described, with wife and children at home, would have been the norm among most male faculty. To avoid being identified with this traditional "wife" image and thereby being marked as "female," they may have learned to avoid mention of their family lives and to stick to academics. They may have developed a "situated identity" (Wiley & Crittenden, 1992) that required them to separate the two spheres in order to be perceived as successful. Research by Santee and Jackson (1982) indicates that there is a significant difference in situational conformity for males and females. This is partially due to females' more positive evaluation of conformity and to the fact that "conformity may lead to stronger, more certain identity inferences for females than males." (p.122) The attributions of the women may reaffirm the academically situated identity of being a professional rather than a female as they conform to socially imposed norms.

Another difference was that the men talked more about their efforts to prevent current gender discrimination than the women. It is evident from these accounts that the women in this study succeeded in academe during a time in which gender discrimination was expressed more overtly. Although several of the women and men

specifically mentioned mentoring female students and seeing the problems that exist today, the general consensus (among those who discussed the issue) was that academic life has greatly improved relative to gender bias or discrimination. This runs contrary to much of the current research. Mark (1986), in discussing the climate of higher education points out that, in addition to many other factors, it is the age and the personalities of individuals who lead the institution that determine whether or not the climate is "chilly for women." Since the cohort of faculty who participated in this study would be a strong part of the leadership of the institution, and in fact most of them have served in leadership roles in some capacity, their views of the status of women in the institution would play a large role in shaping equity policies.

It is interesting to imagine this set of senior professors as members of a promotion and tenure committee. How might they act on their beliefs about gender in academe? One of the men said that he had been on the campus committee, and was certain that they made decisions based on merit, not gender. Another man said that he tells junior people they just have to "bite the bullet" to succeed and not complain about the difficulties of combining home and career. But it is not clear that these senior women would be more sympathetic than the men to junior women's arguments about the difficulties of combining private and professional lives, although that is too much to surmise from this data. Would they expect younger women to keep their private lives out of the process? Especially since conditions for women, in terms of overt discrimination, seem so much improved? Would they see making adjustments for women as compromising the integrity of the meritocratic academic culture in which they

made it? Would they buy feminist arguments about male bias in the academic culture and be open to alternative paradigms of research and knowledge? Would the men, who professed their concerns for younger women, at least as students, be more responsive to the struggles of combining childrearing with an academic career? To find the answers to these questions, we will need to design another study.

This study was designed to generate research questions that will be useful in future studies of the interplay of gender in faculty careers. The participants represent the experiences of a particular age cohort, and it will be of interest to see if the same constructs are useful in explaining the experiences of new generations of faculty. The findings are also of practical importance, because they have implications for the mentoring of junior faculty, understanding policy and decision making within higher education, socialization of graduate students and understanding of faculty interactions.

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